

ONE SMALL LETTER SAVED THE TRUE FAITH!

by
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For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

[Isaiah 9:6]

In the end, the conflict between the parties at Nicea turned on a single word-or more precisely, just one small letter. The orthodox bishops proposed a statement affirming that Christ and the Father are 'of the same substance'-or *homoousion* in Greek. The Arians offered a compromise: they would affirm a statement declaring Christ and His Father *homoiousion*, or 'of like substance.' The difference between the two words is so small as to be almost imperceptible. It boiled down to one iota (the Greek letter corresponding to an 'i') in the middle of the word. But the whole doctrine of Christ's deity hinged on that letter.¹

[John MacArthur, *THE TRUTH WAR*, Thomas Nelson, 2007, p. 109.]

We've all heard complaints from converts and also so-called cradle Orthodox to the effect that surely doctrine doesn't matter that much. After all, isn't our love for each other enough in Christianity? The answer is, of course, "No, it isn't." Not without more being said, it isn't.

Doctrine Absolutely Does Matter!

Blessed Theophylact, speaking for the collective witness of the Fathers of the true Church, explains the Lord's comments to the Father in the Gospel of John (John 17:17-19) requesting that the Father sanctify the Apostles "in Thy truth":

'*Sanctify them*, Christ bids the Father, 'by giving them the Spirit; guard them with right teaching and doctrine; instruct them in the truth.' We can be sanctified and acquire holiness *only* (emphasis supplied) if we hold fast to Orthodox doctrine. In His explanation of what He means by *truth* the Lord makes it clear that He is talking about doctrine: '*Thy word is truth*; there is no falsehood in it. If You help them to observe Your word and guard them from the evil one, they will be sanctified in truth.'²

[BL. Theophylact, *The Explanation of the Gospel of John*, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 2007, Chapter 17:17-19, pp. 262-263.]

The Gospel and the Fathers' interpretation of Holy Scripture testify to this truth: that doctrine is critical to our spiritual health. In fact, we cannot be sanctified and acquire holiness without holding fast to it. Divine Truth is NOT changeable. Doctrine/dogmas cannot change through

time. What has been revealed is what is. That is why only one iota does make a complete difference! Once we alter God's Word to our own desires, we reject His Truth. We reject Him!

The Creed/Symbol of Faith:

In general, it is called by all the Church the characteristic standard and the banner of the Orthodox, by means whereof they, as true soldiers of Christ, can be distinguished from the enemies of Christ and from those who, though hypocritically professing the name of Christ, are in reality sham brethren and misbelievers.³

[*The Rudder (Pedalion)*, p. 159.]

How important is The Creed? Absolutely critical, any Christian who does not believe in it is anathematised by the Church:

As for those who say that there was a time when He was not, and that He was not existent until he was born, and who allege that He was made out of non-beings, or out of some other substance or essence, or that the Son of God is mutable or alterable, the catholic and apostolic Church anathematises them.⁴

[*ibid.*]

How important is The Rudder (see above)? Second only to the Holy Scriptures:

THE RUDDER is second only to the New and Old Testaments in authority:

This Handbook, in effect, is next after the Holy Scriptures a holy Scripture, and next after the Old and New Testaments a Testament... This book, it may be said, is replete with the everlasting bounds set by our Fathers, and the laws which endure forever and which are above all external and imperial laws of the Digests, of the Institutes, of the Codes, and of the Novels for the latter were issued by mere emperors, whereas the former were laid down by Councils, ecumenical and regional, through the Holy Spirit, and emperors ratified them. This book is truly, as we have entitled it, the Rudder of the Catholic Church, which when thereby steered, conveys the sailors and passengers in it, those in holy orders, I mean, as well as laymen, safely to the unruffled haven of the Kingdom above.⁵

[*id.*, p. Li.)

If you are Orthodox and don't know what The Rudder is, shame on you!

Should We Compromise God's Truth? A resounding "No"!

The heretical Arians, who had significant support in high places and, in fact, were in the majority within the Church *offered a compromise* (in other words, request for a spiritual surrender of the Truth) at the First Ecumenical Council at Nicea in 325 A.D. This offer, if accepted, would have denied the Divinity of Christ. Arius was soundly defeated in the Council which met over several years, but his evil influence was not soundly eradicated for a few centuries.

Christ Was Not Created:

I believe... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Only begotten, begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of Light, very God, of very God begotten, not made, of one essence with the Father, and through whom all things are made.⁶

[*id.*, THE ORIGINAL CREED As Formulated By The Seven Ecumenical Councils, Article II of XII, p. vii.]

To Arius and his followers, Christ was created. Were that true, He would not be God. He would not have existed from time immemorial. He would not have been of the same essence/substance as the Father. Had Christ been created, He would not have been equal to His Father.

BL. Theophylact, again for all the Church Fathers, explains that the Father and Son do not form a master servant relationship where the master has the authority to direct the servant's activities and also owns the property. There is a *reciprocity* between Them:

The master owns everything that his servant has, while the servant owns nothing of his master's. Here, on the contrary, what the Father has belongs to the Son, and what the Son has belongs to the Father, for the Son's authority over all creation is *equal* (emphasis supplied) to the Father's.⁷

[BL. Theophylact, *The Explanation of the Gospel of John*, *op.cit.*, p. 260.]

In addition, the Lord declared that what is His Father's and His are mutual between them *All Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine*. Christ would not have said such a thing were it not completely true. If He were less than His Father, "He would not dare to say, *All Thine are Mine*."⁸

[*ibid.*, see BL. Theophylact's explanation of John 17:9-10, on pp. 259-260.]

Brethren,

Never stray one iota from the Faith as revealed by Christ through Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition, these two being a single manifestation of the Divine Spirit:

The Church in her fullness, as a spiritual organism, is neither a collective nor an abstract entity; she is the Divine Spirit, who knows Himself and is unable not to know. The whole Church wrote the Holy Scriptures and then gave life to them in Tradition. To put it more accurately, Scripture and Tradition, as two manifestations of one and the same Spirit, *are a single manifestation. Scripture is nothing but written Tradition, and Tradition is nothing but living Scripture* (emphasis supplied).⁹

[Lay Theologian Alexei Khomiakov in his *On the Western Confessions of Faith*]

A fitting closure to this message is to cite C. S. Lewis in his Introduction to *ON THE INCARNATION* by St. Athanasius:

His epitaph is *Athanasius contra mundum*, 'Athanasius against the world.' We are proud that our own country has more than once stood against the world. Athanasius did the same. He stood for the Trinitarian doctrine, 'whole and undefiled,' when it looked as if all the civilised world was slipping back from Christianity into the religion of Arius-into one of those 'sensible' synthetic religions which are so strongly recommended today and which, then as now, included among their devotees many highly cultivated clergymen. It is his glory that he did not move with the times; it is his reward that he now remains when those times, as all times do, have moved away.¹⁰

[St. Athanasius, *ON THE INCARNATION* (paperback edition), St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1993, pp. 8-9.]

As Orthodox, we are not immune from the spiritual sickness of denying Christ. A recent survey found that 29% of the Orthodox responding did not believe in God! Can you believe it? Make sure you are not one of these. If you are, repent now and find the Faith in Jesus Christ as revealed in the Holy Scriptures, Holy Tradition, including collective witness of the Fathers of the undivided Church and the confirmations of the True Church's spiritual position(s) on issues brought before the First Seven Ecumenical Councils.

+In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

